

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 07061 160409Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5609

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION UN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 7061

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR GARBLED IN PARA THREE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, SY, PLO

SUBJ: ASSAD-PLO MEETING: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

REF A. DAMASCUS 7019, B. DAMASCUS 7029

1. ACTING FONMIN AL KHANI HAS PROVIDED FOLLOWITN "ANSWER" TO
MY QUESTION RE PLO ATTITUDES TOWARDS SHTAURA AGREEMENT
AS REVEALED IN THEIR NOV 11 MEETING WITH ASSAD (REF A)
"THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT MADE AN APPROPRIATE PRESENTATION TO
THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP AND ADVISED THEM CONCERNING THE
SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. THEY SAID THEY CANNOT HOLD THEM-
SELVES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KATUYSHA LAUNCHINGS AND FOR
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THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL." SAID I FOUNT THIS AN INADEQUATE
ANSWER IN VIEW OF REPORT WE HAD RECEIVED THAT ARAFAT HAD
OVERRULED ABU IYAD FOR HAVING SIGNED THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT.
(CAIRO 18614). WHAT WAS SYRIA'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLO'S
PRESENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA ACCORDS?
KHANI REPLIED, "THE PLO CONSIDERS ITSELF STILL BOUND BY THE
SHTAURA AGREEMENT" AND NOTED I SHOULD TRANSMIT THIS AS PART

OF THE FOREGOING SYRIAN ANSWER. AL KHANI ADDED THAT SYRIA VIEWED SHTAURA AS MERELY SETTING THE TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1969 CAIRO ACCORDS, AND THEREFORE, AS FAR AS DAMASCUS WAS CONCERNED OUR REPORT ABOUT ABU IYAD BEING OVERRULED MADE NO SENSE. ASKED ABOUT BASIS OUR INFORMATION, I REPLIED ARAFAT HAD REPORTEDLY MADE HIS STATEMENT IN ANOTHER ARAB CAPITAL.

2. WE HAVE MEANWHILE RECEIVED MORE DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF SYRIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA AGREEMENT FROM SEVERAL SOURCES. MININFO TOLD VISITING US JOURNALISTS THAT "SHTAURA AGREEMENT IS VERY MUCH ALIVE. WE ALL AGREE THAT THE THIRD PHASE OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT FAVORS ALL ARABS AND WE INSIST THAT IT BE IMPLEMENTED. WE ARE EXERTING ALL (EFFORTS) WE CAN TO ACHIEVE IT." AHMAD ALSO ACCUSED ISRAEL OF USING SOUTH LEBANON AS A MEANS TO PREVENT ME PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND CHARGED IT WITH HAVING ANNEXATIONIST AMBITIONS IN THE REGION.

3. ACCORDING TO REGUALR PALESTINIAN SOURCE WHO HAD TALKED WITH PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM SINCE PLO EXCOMM MEETING WITH ASSAD NOVEMBER 10, ASSAD WAS VERY TOUGH ON PLO DURING THE SESSION. ASSAD SAID HE WAS EMBARRASSED AT HAVING ASSURED PRESIDENT SARKIS NOV 6 THAT PALESTINIANS WERE READY TO IMPLEMENT SHTAURA AGREEMENT ON VERY DAY WHEN ARAFAT IN SIDON WAS TAKING A DIFFERENT LINE. ASSAD, SOURCE SAID, PLACED BLAME FOR SITUATION IN SOUTH SQUARELY

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ON PALESTINIANS AND HAD RULED SYRIAN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR PLO IN SOUTH OUT OF THE QUESTION. PRESIDENT HAD NOTIED HE COULD NOT AT THIS TIME EVEN PROPERLY DEFEND GOLAN AND HE HAD NO INTENTION OF INVOLVING SYRIAN FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "OUTBIDDING" SHOULD DEFEND THEMSELVES, ADDING THAT IF PALESTINIANS WISHED TO RELY ON EGYPT FOR MILITARY SUPPORT, EGYPTIAN PLANES WERE ONLY 20 MINUTES AWAY FROM SOUTH LEBANON. (ASSAD ALSO ALLEGEDLY SARCASTECALLY NOTED ARAFAT HAD APPLAUDED SADAT'S REMARK TO PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO GO THE THE KNESSET. ARAFAT DENIED HAVING APPLAUDED IT, AT WHICH POINT FHUM REPORTEDLY INTERRUPTED THAT PERSONALLY HE WOULD HAVE WALKED OUT.)

4. FAHUM TOLD SOURCE HE SUSPECTED THAT ASSAD'S REFERENCES TO EGYPT WERE AIMED AT ARAFAT'S ATTEMPTS TO MANEUVER BETWEEN SADAT AND ASSAD, AND ASSAD WAS CALLING HIM ON IT. FAHUM SAID ASSAD HAD CLOSED MEETING BY TELLING PALESTINIANS TO WORK OUT IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA AGREEMENT WITH SARKIS. HE WOULD AGREE TO WHATEVER ARRANGEMENTS THEY CONCLUDED.

5. COMMENT: ACCORDING BEIRUT 5661 ARAFAT IS NOT DUE BACK IN DAMASCUS UNTIL TODAY, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14,

TO REPORT TO ASSAD. TO DATE WE HAVE NO CLEAR INDICATION HOW FAR THE SYRIAN ARE WILLING TO GO IN PUSHING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT, BUT WE SUSPECT THAT SYRIAN PRESSURE WILL BE MORE PASSIVE THAN CONFRONTATIONAL IN NATURE, I.E. WITHHOLDING ITS SUPPORT WHILE FIGHTING CONTINUES. IT WILL BE WHILE BEFORE THE NATURE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SYRIA'S PRESSURES ON THE PALESTINIANS ARE KNOWN.

6. AL KHANI'S "ANSWER" IN PARA 1 SOUNDS AS IF IT WERE DICTATED BY ASSAD PERSONALLY. IT REFLECTS SYRIAN RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS DAMASCUS-PLO EXCHANGES DIRECTLY WITH US.

MURPHY

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